

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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### FINAL 1979-80 WATERFOWL HUNTING SEASON FRAMEWORKS ISSUED

The final waterfowl hunting "framework" regulations issued for 1979-80 by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are generally the same as last year, with the following exceptions:

#### Atlantic Flyway

--Three-way season split option. States are offered the option to split waterfowl seasons into three segments of unequal or equal length as an alternative to zoning.

--Zoning in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania. These States are offered the option to select waterfowl seasons by geographical areas, in compliance with Service zoning criteria.

--Addition of green-winged teal as a bonus duck. This species may be taken along with blue-winged teal as bonus ducks during a 9-day period within the regular duck season in States selecting conventional bag and possession limits.

--Canada geese in New Jersey. The liberalized Canada goose regulations in effect last year in southern New Jersey are being offered Statewide. These regulations include a 90-day season and bag and possession limits of four and eight birds, respectively. The liberalization is being made in response to increasing goose populations and associated habitat and crop depredation problems.

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--Greater snow geese. The limits for snow geese in the flyway are being increased to four birds daily and eight in possession, also in response to the abundance of the species and associated problems. The season framework is being extended from January 20 to January 31 to allow additional opportunity to harvest these geese, especially in the Back Bay area of Virginia and North Carolina.

#### Mississippi Flyway

--Framework dates. States may select hunting season opening dates on the Saturday closest to October 1, instead of on October 1. The applicable date this year is September 29. The same type of "floating" framework date has been successfully used in the Central and Pacific Flyways for several years. Also, Mississippi is offered the option of extending its waterfowl season to January 31 in an effort to improve the distribution of harvest within the State.

--Changes in duck limits. In States selecting the point system, the mid-point category is being changed to 25 points (35 points in 1978). This category includes the male mallard. Under conventional regulations, the mallard daily bag limit will be increased to three birds, of which no more than two may be females. Breeding population surveys indicate that the status of the mallard is improved. The black duck limit will change from two to one, but will be independent of the mallard limit.

--Canada geese. Canada goose quotas for Illinois and Wisconsin will be 35,000 birds each. Illinois may establish goose seasons by the same zones used for setting duck seasons. Minor regulatory changes in limits and season lengths apply to Minnesota and Wisconsin. No Canada goose seasons are offered in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and southwestern Tennessee in support of a recently approved management plan for the Mississippi Valley population of Canada geese.

## Central Flyway

--Changes in duck limits. Mallard drakes and other mid-point ducks will be assigned 20 points (25 points in 1978), and five mallards (no more than one female) may be taken in States selecting conventional regulations. These changes reflect an improvement in the status of mallards.

--Area closures in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Texas. Areas previously closed to canvasback and redhead hunting are being opened to allow a minimal harvest of redheads only. Canvasbacks will remain protected in these areas. The closed area for both species in Texas is being eliminated.

--Goose seasons in South Dakota. Early season termination dates for geese in six counties are being discontinued because of the improved status of the Western Prairie population of Canada geese and recognition that only low harvests occur in these counties late in the season.

--Sandhill crane seasons in Colorado and Wyoming. Greater flexibility is being given these States in selecting hunting dates, and a slightly longer season (7 days) is being offered in Wyoming. The Wyoming hunting area is being expanded to four new counties outside the range of whooping cranes.

## Central and Pacific Flyways

--Ross' goose. In both flyways, this goose is being included within the regular limits for "white" and "light" geese. A recent study indicates that the summer population is in the order of 100,000 birds and that special harvest restrictions are no longer necessary.

## Pacific Flyway

--Restrictive goose regulations in portions of California and Oregon. In response to depressed populations of cackling Canada geese, white-fronted geese, and lesser snow geese breeding on Wrangel Island, U.S.S.R., several restrictive season length and/or limit options are proposed for the Klamath-Tule Lake area of Oregon and California, and northern California. The latter restrictions will also benefit the small population of the Tule white-fronted goose which winters in California.

--Mexican-like duck. This hybrid between the mallard and the Mexican duck is being included within the regular duck limit. Recent studies have determined that genotypically pure Mexican ducks no longer occur in the United States. The Mexican duck, now confined to portions of Mexico, has been removed from the list of endangered species.

The Service's final frameworks for migratory waterfowl hunting were published in the August 28 Federal Register. State conservation agency authorities will select their seasons and other regulations from those offered in the final Federal frameworks. Final migratory bird hunting regulations for all States will be published in the Federal Register in late September.

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